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# *The Bay of Pigs: 25 Years Leave Hate Undimmed*

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PLAYA LARGA, Cuba — Whitecaps ripple across a sandbar in the shimmering waters of the Bay of Pigs, a short distance off a beach where young Cubans play frisbee and stretch languidly under a baking sun.

Twenty-five years ago, on Monday, April 17, a brigade of 1,500 Cuban exiles, organized, trained, supplied and directed by the United States, splashed ashore here in a disastrous attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro.

Within 72 hours the invaders had been defeated, most of them taken prisoner, vastly enhancing Mr. Castro's prestige and yielding worldwide embarrassment and scorn for the United States.

It was a spectacular case of mismanagement, historians say, laced with faulty assumptions and faulty information, ultimately hobbled by the United States' fruitless effort to maintain the fiction that the invasion was entirely the work of anti-Castro exiles. In pursuit of "plausible deny-ability" President John F. Kennedy limited air support and ordered nearby United States Navy units not to help the exiles, who had landed believing they had the full backing of the United States.

## **'A Tragic Episode'**

Many of the invasion veterans, now United States citizens living in Miami, find themselves still struggling with an enormous affection for their new country and an ineradicable sense of betrayal.

"It was a tragic episode," a senior State Department official said the other day.

These days, Playa Larga and the other Bay of Pigs landing beach, Playa Girón, are quiet resorts that only faintly suggest the scene of an agonizing defeat that influenced American foreign and domestic affairs for years and left wounds that are still raw.

The hostility that the leaders of the United States felt toward Mr. Castro in 1961, as he guided Cuba into the Soviet orbit, has not cooled. In turn, the Cuban leader, who Senate investigators say was the target of eight C.I.A. assassination plots, has developed an unrelenting enmity for the United States.

Today the two countries remain in a state of undeclared war, backing opposing armies in Central America and Africa, undermining each other diplomatically wherever possible and often exchanging accusations and insults.

A United States trade embargo imposed six months before the Bay of Pigs remains in effect and most Americans — exceptions are journalists, researchers and those with relatives on the island — are barred by the Treasury Department from visiting Cuba.

## **In the Aftermath**

In May 1962, a little more than a year after the Bay of Pigs and a bit more than three years after Mr. Castro and his guerrillas had toppled the regime of Fulgencio Batista, Cuba and the Soviet Union announced an alliance in which the Soviet Union now provides Cuba with \$4 billion a year in aid — more than any other Soviet ally. The aid has enabled Mr. Castro to build the largest and best equipped military force in Latin America.

On an island that once seemed like an offshore province of the United States, the Russians have stationed a brigade of combat troops and scores of advisers and technicians. Soviet warships visit Cuban ports and TU-95 Bear reconnaissance planes refuel near Havana for flights along the United States coastline.

Some historians say they believe the United States' seeming lack of resolve at the Bay of Pigs encouraged the Soviet Union to install the ballistic missiles in Cuba that led to the chilling superpower confrontation known as the Cuban missile crisis 18 months after the invasion. The historians also say they believe that to some extent the eagerness of American leaders to affirm their resolve after the Bay of Pigs failure helped propel the United States into the Vietnam quagmire.

Many of the veterans later served in the United States armed forces. Some have become prosperous businessmen and a few have served in public office in the United States.

Four Bay of Pigs veterans were convicted of the burglary at the Watergate Hotel in Washington that led to President Richard M. Nixon's resignation in 1974. Other veterans of the invasion have been involved in terrorist bombings in New York and Miami and attacks on diplomats of the Castro Government.

## **A Memo From Nixon**

Sixteen months ago the United States and Cuba signed an important immigration agreement and relations between the two countries seemed to be improving. But a short time later, in the spring of 1985, the United States began a new broadcasting service to Cuba called Radio Marti that anti-Castro Cubans in Miami, including many Bay of Pigs veterans, hoped would undermine the Havana Government.

Mr. Castro angrily suspended the immigration agreement and, since then,

relations between the two countries have been, in the words of the Cuban-born Harvard historian Jorge Domínguez, "dead in the water."

The first recommendation that the United States overthrow Mr. Castro came in early 1959, a few months after he had taken power, in a memorandum from Mr. Nixon, who was then Vice President. The C.I.A. set to work on plans that, with the endorsement of both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy, evolved into the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The Cuban Government says it lost 161 dead in the invasion, including 5 civilians. In Miami, the exiled veterans say they lost 107 dead. Four American airmen were also killed.

Twenty months after the invasion, Mr. Castro traded the freedom of nearly 1,200 exile prisoners for \$53 million worth of food and medicine from the United States. Veterans in Miami say he kept 10 prisoners and is still holding two of them.

For several years survivors of the Bay of Pigs and other exiles, continuing under the direction of the C.I.A., turned Miami into a seething clandestine base for scores of paramilitary organizations bent on killing Mr. Castro and ridding Cuba of Communism.

A few months before the invasion, the United States had broken diplomatic relations with Cuba. In 1977, during the Carter Administration, there was a thaw in relations and the two countries opened offices in each other's capitals, providing limited diplomatic contact. Lately, however, contact has been extremely limited.

## **No Resentment, He Says**

Jorge Mas, a Bay of Pigs veteran who is now a wealthy building contractor in Miami, says he harbors no resentment for "the lack of support that was so many times promised to all of us."

At the time of the invasion, Mr. Mas says, "we were just a bunch of young Cubans" who "lacked the contacts and influence that would have guaranteed what had been agreed upon."

But that has changed. A few years ago Mr. Mas, now in his mid-40's, helped establish the Cuban American Foundation, which lobbies journalists and Washington officials and has become a potent political force with access to the White House.

"Had the Bay of Pigs taken place today," Mr. Mas said, "I'm just about certain that the backing would have arrived as promised."